

DIFFRACTIVE OPTICAL ELEMENT

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

5 The present invention relates to an improved diffraction optical element (DOE). In particular, it relates to the DOE having a smoothly etched surface substrate.

Description of the Prior Art

10 With the miniaturization of electronic components and electronic devices used in mobile telephones, personal computers, etc., there has been increasing demand for finer and higher speed drill processing. The application of a DOE has been promoted as a key device to satisfy this demand.

15 Unlike conventional optical components utilizing refraction and/or reflection, the DOE utilizes optical diffraction and directly controls the optical phases, and therefore, a wide range of applications including, multi-spot beam splitters, for example, can be expected.

20 As shown in Fig. 5, the DOE can split one processing laser beam into multiple spots. Simultaneous processing at plural spots, shaping patterns such as marking, and non-circular-shape processing have been achieved with high-speed.

Figure 4 shows an example wherein the DOE is utilized in drill processing using a carbon dioxide gas laser to split one processing laser beam into multiple spots and simultaneously drill a plurality of holes. (Japanese Patent Laid-Open

No. 2000-280226 and Japanese Patent Laid-Open No. 2000-280225)

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention provides an improved DOE which has a smoothly etched surface.

The DOE of the present invention comprises a polycrystalline substrate which has an upper film layer having the same material as the substrate, and having finer polycrystalline grains than that of the substrate or having an amorphous phase laminated on the substrate.

10 It is preferable that the DOE be provided with a polycrystalline substrate whose diameter of crystal grains at an etched surface is not more than $1\text{ }\mu\text{m}$.

It is also preferable that the DOE be provided with an amorphous phase at an etched surface of the substrate.

15 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

Figure 1 is a diagram showing the general steps for manufacturing the DOE related to the preferred embodiment of the present invention.

Figure 2 shows a surface state of zinc selenide (ZnSe) vapor-deposited film after dry etching according to the present invention.

20 Figure 3 shows a process flow chart of manufacturing a conventional DOE.

Figure 4 shows an example of the DOE application to the laser drill processing.

Figure 5 shows three examples of the DOE application to other laser

processing.

Figure 6 is a schematic figure showing problems during manufacturing conventional DOE with the use of hydrocarbon gas.

Figure 7 shows the surface state of a ZnSe substrate after conventional
5 direct etching.

DETAIL DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

ZnSe, having excellent transmittance at infrared optical wavelength, has been used as material of optical elements for a carbon dioxide gas laser
10 (utilizing wavelength is 9.3 μm or 10.6 μm). In general, as ZnSe having a diameter of 1 or 2 inches and a thickness of several millimeters for an optical element, polycrystals have been used instead of a single crystal considering the cost aspect. In most cases, a high purity polycrystalline ZnSe synthesized by a chemical vapor deposition (CVD) method has been used.

15 In the reactive ion etching (RIE) method used for manufacturing DOE, as referred to in Fig. 6, a chemical reaction occurs between radicals generated from the reactive gas and ZnSe on the substrate surface, generating bi-products. These bi-products are then removed by sputtering. Thus the etching progresses.

20 Hydrocarbon-based gas, which is commonly used for a single crystal, has been known as etching gas of the RIE method. However, if hydrocarbon-based gas is used as the etching gas, the etching rate depends heavily on the crystal orientation of the polycrystalline grains.

As a result, the surface of the ZnSe polycrystals becomes rough, deteriorating the optical characteristics of the DOE such as deviation of the diffracted optical intensity and focussed position accuracy.

5 As described above, the present invention provides an improved DOE which has a smoothly etched surface.

Also the DOE of the present invention comprises a polycrystalline substrate which has an upper film layer having the same material as the substrate, and having finer polycrystalline grains than that of the substrate or having an
10 amorphous phase laminated on the substrate. The surface having finer polycrystalline grains or an amorphous phase can be easily obtained by laminating an upper film layer.

The DOE of the present invention is preferably provided with a polycrystalline substrate whose sizes of crystal grains at an etched surface are
15 not more than about 1 μm . The sizes of crystal grains at an etched surface are more desirably not more than about 0.5 μm , because smaller diameter of crystal grains improves the precision of the etched surface.

The DOE of the present invention is also preferably provided with an amorphous phase substrate at an etched surface. The reason is that a more
20 smoothly etched surface can be obtained because of the surface having no crystal grain. The surface having finer crystal grains or an amorphous phase can be obtained by selecting an appropriate laminating condition, or applying heat treatments, surface treatments and so on.

As the surface of the substrate or the upper film layer has finer crystal grains or an amorphous phase to be etched, the etching rate of the surface becomes more even than that of conventional polycrystalline substrates. This is because the finer polycrystalline layer or the amorphous phase layer is less affected by the etching rate dependency on the crystal orientation, compared with the conventional substrate having coarse polycrystalline grains. As a result, the surface of the DOE of the present invention is improved to become smooth and then the deviation of the optical diffraction intensity and/or optical irradiated position becomes small.

A buffer layer between the upper film layer and the substrate is more suitably provided in order to prevent peeling-off of the upper film layer from the substrate.

The buffer layer is preferably selected from materials suitable for transmitting a light at operating wavelength. Materials for the buffer layer are preferably to have an optical absorption coefficient not more than 10 cm^{-1} . Considering the buffer layer thickness to prevent peeling-off, an optical absorption coefficient is limited to the above-described value.

ZnSe is more suitable for the polycrystalline substrate, especially for a carbon-dioxide-laser-DOE in the present invention.

More suitably, the substrate is formed by the CVD method, because a high purity substrate which is superior in the optical transmittance can be obtained.

For example, the buffer layer is preferably selected from one of the fluorine compounds such as barium di-fluoride (BaF_2), thorium tetra-fluoride (ThF_4)

and ytterbium tri-fluoride (YbF_3) for the carbon-dioxide-laser-DOE.

In addition, it is desirable that the buffer layer be formed by a vapor phase growing method, because a high purity layer which is superior to the optical transmittance can be obtained for the same reason as in the substrate.

5 In addition, the upper film layer and the buffer layer may be formed by one of the vapor deposition method (Electron Beam method, Ion Assist method, and Resistant Heat method). This is because the thickness of the film layer can be easily controlled by such methods.

10 In addition, the etching method is preferably applied by a dry etching method, and more suitably a RIE method. The precision of an etched shape improves, because the etching direction has greater controllability compared with the plasma etching method

PREFERRED EMBODIMENT OF THE INVENTION

15 Hereinafter, an embodiment of the present invention will be described in detail.

Figure 1 is an example of a schematic sectional view in each step of manufacturing a semiconductor device for a DOE according to the present invention.

20 Step A: A ZnSe polycrystalline substrate 1 is prepared.

Step B: A ThF_4 film 7 is formed on the substrate 1. An upper film layer having the same material as the substrate and having finer polycrystalline grains than those of the substrate or an amorphous phase is laminated on the

film 7. In this example, a ZnSe film layer 8 is laminated as the upper film layer.

The thickness of at least 3 μm is necessary for the ZnSe upper film layer 8, because the etching depth of at least 3 μm is necessary in the upper film layer.

The ThF_4 film layer 7 is to prevent peeling-off of the ZnSe upper film layer 8
5 from the polycrystalline substrate 1.

The ThF_4 film layer 7 is unnecessary under the condition that the detachment of the ZnSe upper film layer 8 from the polycrystalline substrate 1 can be prevented. For example, the ZnSe upper film layer 8 can be improved
10 in order to remove a surface layer which is changed quality during a surface polishing or contained impurities thereof. By applying the above treatment, such ThF_4 film layer 7 can be omitted.

Step C: A resist layer 2 is formed on the ZnSe upper film layer 8.

Step D: The resist layer 2 is selectively irradiated by means of a photomask
15 (not shown) and formed a printed pattern thereon. Then, by developing the resist layer 2, a resist pattern 5 is formed.

Step E: The ZnSe upper film layer 8 is dry etched with RIE method by using the resist pattern 5 as a mask to form a patterned ZnSe upper film layer 80. As the ZnSe upper film layer 8 has fine crystal grains or an amorphous phase, the
20 etching rate is not strongly affected by the crystal orientation. As a surface layer having fine crystal grains or an amorphous phase has random crystal-oriented grains or no crystal grain, etching rate of the substrate is not dependent on the crystal orientation as a whole. That is the reason why the

etched surface of the ZnSe upper film layer 80 does not become coarse.

Step F: The resist pattern 5 is removed.

Step G: After anti-reflection (AR) coating 6 has been formed on the ZnSe upper film layer 80 and a bottom surface of the polycrystalline substrate 1,

5 DOE manufacturing is completed.

Example

According to the above-described manufacturing steps, a polycrystalline ZnSe with crystal grain sizes of about 60 μm , manufactured by the CVD
10 method had been cut and polished to form a substrate having a diameter of 50 mm and a thickness of 5 mm (whose surface roughness (Ra) was 2 nm). A ThF_4 film layer of 0.2 μm thickness and a ZnSe upper film layer having a thickness of 6 μm were laminated on the polished substrate by the resistance-heat vapor deposition method. The ZnSe upper film layer had crystalline having crystal
15 grains of about 0.06 μm width in a growth direction. In addition, the Ra of the ZnSe upper film layer was 2 nm, which is the same as the ZnSe substrate.

The ZnSe upper film layer deposited on the ZnSe substrate was etched by the RIE method.

The etching condition was as follows:

20 Gas Material: Methane Gas

Flow Rate: 5 sccm

Gas Pressure: 1 Pa

RF Power: 0.5 W / cm^2

Etching Time: 180 min.

Figure 2 shows a surface state of the etched ZnSe upper film layer in the present invention. It was confirmed that the surface was not rough. Etching depth was about 4 μm , and Ra was 3 nm.

5 The DOE obtained by the example showed satisfactory optical characteristics for DOE.

Comparative Example

As a comparative example, a DOE using polycrystalline ZnSe was
10 manufactured by the following steps as shown in Fig. 3.

Step A: A polycrystalline ZnSe was synthesized from Zn and H_2Se by the chemical reaction: $\text{Zn} + \text{H}_2\text{Se} \rightarrow \text{ZnSe} + \text{H}_2$.

Step B: The polycrystalline ZnSe was cut and a ZnSe polycrystalline substrate 1 was formed, and the surface thereof was polished.

15 Step C: A resist layer 2 was formed on the ZnSe polycrystalline substrate 1.

Step D: Light 4 was selectively irradiated on the resist layer 2 by means of a photomask 3 to form a printed pattern thereon.

Step E: The resist layer 2 was developed to form a resist pattern 5.

Step F: RIE with the use of hydrocarbon gas, which had been normally used
20 in single crystal processing, was performed on the ZnSe polycrystalline substrate 1 using the resist pattern 5 to form a patterned ZnSe polycrystalline substrate 10.

Step G: The resist pattern 5 was removed to form the patterned ZnSe

polycrystalline substrate 10.

Step H: An anti-deflection (AR) coating layer 6 was formed on both surfaces of the patterned ZnSe polycrystalline substrate 10.

A DOE was obtained through the above series of steps (A through H).

5 Figure 7 shows a surface of the ZnSe substrate which has no vapor deposited film layer on the ZnSe polycrystalline substrate and directly etched on the same condition as mentioned above. The etching depth was about 4 μm , and the Ra was 80 nm. The surface state was not a mirror surface.

10 The DOE obtained by the comparative example showed inferior optical characteristics compared with that obtained by the example.

15 It should be understood that the embodiment herein disclosed is an illustration in all aspects, and therefore has no limitation. The scope of the present invention is not indicated by the foregoing descriptions but by the scope of the claims of the invention and it is intended to include therein equivalents of the claims of the invention and all modifications within the scope thereof.